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 Hochfeldstrasse 32, CH-3012 Bern, Switzerland  
[info@peterlang.com](mailto:info@peterlang.com), [www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com), [www.peterlang.net](http://www.peterlang.net)

RALF SIMON

## The Temporality of Hospitality<sup>1</sup>

### The guest as a figure of the third

The guest is a complex figure. As a duty based on natural rights, hospitality is necessary to the development of culture: a guest may not be turned away. But if the guest is ever assimilated, he is no longer a guest: once "integrated", he becomes one of "us". As a guest, that is, he may not be turned away, but must still remain a stranger. The guest is thus a figure who cannot be turned down and cannot be integrated – the guest is simultaneously A and not-A. He is a figure of the third.<sup>2</sup>

1 This essay is a further step in a series of studies the author has published on hospitality. The definition of the guest (in Hans-Dieter Bahr's sense) and the understanding of the scenography of the guest as a primal scene of narrative have already been formulated and given a thorough foundation. The new consideration in this essay is how to put the narrative and temporal doubling in the guest scenario in terms of a theory of time. See Ralf Simon: *Auf der Schwelle verharren. Zu einem Erzählmuster der Moderne*. In: *Der Gast als Fremder. Narrative Alterität in der Kultur*. Eds. Evi Fountoulakis/Boris Previsic. Bielefeld: transcript 2011, 179–192; Ralf Simon: *Die Nacht des Gastes. Zur Semantik der Ungastlichkeit in E.T.A. Hoffmanns "Nachtstücken"*. In: *Gastlichkeit. Erkundungen einer Schwellensituation*. Eds. Peter Friedrich/Rolf Parr. Heidelberg: Synchron 2009, 263–280; Ralf Simon: *Ikononarratologie*. In: *Das erzählende und das erzählte Bild*. Eds. Alexander Honold/Ralf Simon. Munich: Fink 2010, 301–317. Also see the extended book-length German version of this essay in Ralf Simon: *Erzähltheorie, Gastsemantik, Philosophie der Zeit (McTaggart). Ein Essay zu den Eigenzeiten der Erzählung mit Hinweisen zu Kleist, Raabe und Arno Schmidt*. Hannover: Wehrhahn 2015.

2. For this elementary definition see also Hans-Dieter Bahr: *Die Sprache des Gastes. Eine Metaphik*. Leipzig: Reclam 1994.

## The guest scene as the primal scene of narrative

The appearance of the guest has many temporalities. First of all, the guest himself is embedded in a temporal sequence: he knocks at the door; he is greeted on the threshold; he is invited in; he offers a gift to the host; he tells his story; after a while, he leaves. This sequence constitutes the primal scene of hospitality. In Lotman's narratology<sup>3</sup> the basic motor of narrative involves an actor leaving his native realm, crossing a border, and confronting the semantics of a new realm, so the narrated event<sup>4</sup> consists of a negotiation of two semantic spaces that is carried out by the temporal movement of a protagonist. Lotman's structural schema that "a protagonist crosses the border from one realm into another" (A versus B) can easily be transformed into the structural schema that "a protagonist is someone else's guest" (A goes to B).

In this interpretation in cultural theory, the guest scene is the primal scene not only of hospitality but of narrative as such. The threshold to the host's house is the spatial border; the difference between the guest knocking at the door and the host opening it establishes two different spatial semantics; the negotiations of hospitality constitute the semantics realized in the narrative as plot. With its specific sequence of events, the primal scene of hospitality is temporal from the outset. Laid out as a series of steps in a plot, the scene is always itself a narrative: knocking → opening the door → eye contact → greeting → entrance of the guest → the guest's "gifts" (identifying himself and perhaps offering an actual gift to the host) → breaking of bread → the guest's story.

3 Jurij Lotman: *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures 1977, esp. chapter 8.

4 For Lotman: *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (note 3), the narrated event is a moment of border crossing. An actor crosses the border between one semantics and another, usually foreign semantics. His importation of his semantics into the realm of the other is perceived as a disturbing event.

## Time in time: The *mise en abyme* of narrative

This narrative sequence contains a second narrative. The guest not only offers a gift to the host, but also, crucially, tells the story of his origin. Often, this story is the actual gift, for the host expects the guest to bring not only himself but also a story (the story as an offering).

Therefore, if the scenography of the guest has something to do with the original scene of narrative, the narrative is immediately doubled, as a narrative in a narrative. The narrative may offer itself as a temporal sequence, but in this doubling in the primal scene, it also always contains its own reflection. It carries a non-temporal dimension in itself. From the outset, the narrative transaction in the guest scene creates a space for a second narration to be embedded in the narrative sequence. In other words, narrative has hardly turned up, and it is already doubling itself. Can it thus also be understood as a reflection of its own temporality?

## The temporality of the guest

How long should, can and may a guest stay? When a guest settles in for a long time and becomes a parasite, a host can make clear that too much is being demanded of him. What determines the guest's temporality – here, in the sense of a duration? Can a host finally say "the boat is full" without negating the right to hospitality itself? Just as this right cannot be codified, the temporality of the guest cannot be based on a contract.<sup>5</sup> It is fundamental to natural rights as well as to the constitution of culture. And the length of time the guest can stay is ideally an offering that is mutual and

5 The tension between absolute hospitality and its *de jure* regulation, which always involves a *de facto* retraction of that absoluteness, is discussed in Jacques Derrida: *Of Hospitality*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2000, 25.

voluntary, with no rules that can be formulated. Some guests one would like to put up longer than they can arrange to say; other guests one can no longer put up with and must positively invite to leave.

The German word "Gastgeber" [host] contains the idea of giving or the gift ("geben", "Gabe"). The host allocates a space for the guest, sometimes even with a speech act that is *radical* in the proper sense: the guest should feel at home and consider the host's house his own (in some realizations of archaic hospitality, the exchange between guest and host went so far as to entitle the guest to the wife of the host).<sup>6</sup> The mutual recognition in the guest scene, with its many characteristics of exchange that should never be mistaken for an exchange based on equivalence, can only be *radical* – that is, can only lead to the mutual substitution of host and guest – because it is temporally limited. The host gives himself to the guest by receiving the guest; the guest is given the host's house as if it were his own; the host gives hospitality and in turn receives a gift from the guest; the etymologies of guest and host go back to the indistinguishability of the same root<sup>7</sup> – all in all, the guest scene profoundly undermines the superficially fixed positions of host and guest.

The undermining of those positions must be seen as a temporal event. The real boundary of the space of the guest – of the space set aside for the guest – is time. The guest is only a guest when he neither leaves nor stays (were he to stay, then in the course of time he would be integrated). Yet only for a matter of time can he be this figure of the third. Neither staying nor leaving – this temporal paradox prevents the establishment of a duration, but at the same time, it is unsatisfying: from a political perspective, if we completely renounce any operationalization of the time of the guest, then in time, only the purveyors of an inhospitable regimentation will benefit. How can this problem be overcome? The hermeneutic answer, of course, is to give the matter a reflexive turn to address the deeper issue inside the

6 Bahr: *Sprache des Gastes* (note 2), 69–71.

7 Emile Benveniste: *Problems in General Linguistics*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press 1971, 271–280; Emile Benveniste: *Indo-European Language and Society*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press 1973, book 1: *Economy*, section 2: "Giving and Taking".

problem. Here, that means we have to try to understand the paradox of time more precisely.

## The temporal moment of literature

The guest makes a threefold offering to the host: his actual gift, the gift of his story, and the final gift that is realized in his act of turning himself over to his host, of putting himself at the host's mercy. When we accept that offering, we give the guest the gift of time in return – a time outside of time. Time is taken; time is given<sup>8</sup> – but time cannot be exchanged. The giving and taking of time remain asymmetrical. They cannot be repaid by anything.

Strictly speaking, this outline of the temporality of hospitality corresponds to a way of thinking about the temporality of literature and the temporality of reading. In reading, we take time, we are given the gift of the text, and we respond to what we read, but this response is not part of an exchange based on equivalence. As with hospitality, a more radical exchange is involved in the gift of literature and the giving of reading time: in the act of reading, after all, the intensive reader takes on the role of the author,<sup>9</sup> while in his gift, the author first had to unveil himself. Hospitality, then, offers a

8 Derrida's reflections on the temporality of hospitality are primarily based on this form of "giving time", see Jacques Derrida: *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1992, esp. chapter 2.

9 The claim that the reader becomes an author is made by Wolfgang Iser as part of his aesthetics of reception; see Wolfgang Iser: *The Act of Reading*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press 1978. As Evi Fountoulakis argues, for an aesthetics of reception to be convincing, it must finally be an aesthetics of the acceptance of an offering. When he sees reception as an activity that constitutes a new author, Iser actually misses the point of the idea of reception; see Evi Fountoulakis: *Die Unruhe des Gastes. Zu einer Schwellenfigur in der Moderne*. Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach 2014, 194.

model for thinking about literature itself: literature is a guest in language; it expresses the hospitality of language. Poetry is very often thought of as a gift or an offering, or even as *largesse*,<sup>10</sup> so it involves a category that goes right to the heart of the semantics of hospitality: the guest's gift.

The scene of hospitality, then, provides a space for the guest and his narrative. This primal scene includes not only a narrative but also its hearing, acceptance, and reception by its audience, the host. The temporality of the guest with the narrative he offers is the temporality of an elementary literature. And the issue of how long a guest may stay is also the issue of how much time is allocated for poetry.

At such a fundamental level of reflection, it is clearly impossible to quantify time in any way. But the temporality of the scene of hospitality and the doubling of the narrative inherent in it can be developed further by turning to a philosophical theory of time.

## A series and B series

In his classic 1908 essay "The Unreality of Time", J.M.E. McTaggart distinguished two basic ideas of time.<sup>11</sup> If we characterize the time of action in terms of a subject as a generating actor, then we can distinguish the past and the future from any given point in the present. The present is thus always

understood as a constantly changing, mobile point of time on the temporal axis, and with every step, the whole line of time is temporally displaced – or better, carried along. As a result, every future eventually becomes a past, and every contemporary past always sinks steadily deeper into the past as a whole. McTaggart calls this mode of the structure of time the A series.

At the same time, though, we work with a second concept: the distinction between earlier and later. Here, in what McTaggart calls the B series, the relationship between points in time remains constant despite the progress of time. Anything earlier than a particular point in time will always remain earlier than it for all time, and all simultaneities will also always remain simultaneous. Temporal relationships are sustained through the entire course of time, so that one can speak here of a relational position of time.

In the A series, the past is newly interpreted from the perspective of a given centre of action and is then supplemented by more and more pasts. In contrast, in the B series, the past as such is stable. Both of McTaggart's temporal series are elementary, while also being irreducible to each other – that is the source of the unreality of time.<sup>12</sup> In McTaggart's main argument, the A series can generate time without the B series, but only with the supplement of an ordering series (the C series). As a result, the A series can only be understood as leading to either a *circulus vitiosus* or a paradoxical self-multiplication – and this leads McTaggart to conclude that time is unreal.<sup>13</sup> But a further argument is also implied: if the A and the B series are both equally essential, then the desired concept of time as unified collapses into two fundamentally different but still equally necessary concepts. Again, time is seen to be unreal. If stability primarily derives from how time in the B series is fundamentally not related to a subject as an agent of action, if the dynamic of time derives from the A series, and if neither series can be represented by the other, then time can only be seen as an essential

<sup>10</sup> Jean Starobinski: *Largesse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1997.

<sup>11</sup> See John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart: *The Unreality of Time*. *Mind* 17 (1908), no. 68, 457–474. A series of reformulations of McTaggart's basic idea have been gratefully borrowed from Karen Gloy: *Zeit. Eine Morphologie*. Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber 2006, 8–9, 162–166. McTaggart's formalistic argument is focused exclusively on the philosophy of time. My attempt in this essay to interpret the A and B series in terms of cultural theory is not part of the discussion in McTaggart's essay; in fact, it even contradicts his idea that time is unreal. As I try to show here, time has a relative stability based precisely on how the very differences between the A and B series allow them to supplement each other.

<sup>12</sup> "I believe, however, [...] that the distinction of past, present and future is as essential to time as the distinction of earlier and later [...]" (McTaggart: *Unreality of Time* (note 11), 458)

<sup>13</sup> See McTaggart: *Unreality of Time* (note 11), 468–470.



incompatibility of distinct fundamental ideas – and hence it must be seen as unthinkable and unreal.

In the absence of such strict formalization, our normal concept of time combines both series. Hardly anyone goes as far as the radical claim that the substance of the past actually changes as present time continues into the future: a pure, ontologically defined A series hardly seems worth considering (yet see below). As a fundamental axiom, the B series stabilizes the instability in the A series (which results from how time as a whole is experienced anew and reinterpreted from the dynamic perspective of the ongoing present). Only when one tries to understand the particular logic of each series beyond their normally unproblematic mutual interpenetration does the analytic separation of the two temporal series reveal its considerable explosive potential.

As long as we only talk about how time is interpreted anew in the A series while retaining its stable relationships in the B series, there is no serious problem here. But what if one put aside the turn to a subject-oriented philosophy of time that began with Augustine and did actually claim that the past is not just interpreted anew but rather undergoes substantial changes? What would our world view look like if the past itself changed at every moment?<sup>14</sup> Is that even comprehensible? Would not such a past – not yet over – then necessarily have to be part of the present? But if it changed, what would we then be referring to when we refer to the past? The idea that we have to interpret ourselves anew at each moment may be reasonably familiar, but what about the dizzying assumption that in the next moment our past self as such could be a completely different self that has undergone a further, seemingly independent development? World views based on the resurrection of the soul are never far from the idea that a present self could see its own past as something quite unfamiliar and alien. To avoid this line of thought (which is untenable for Western culture), not only must the A series be seen both non-ontologically and

14 These radical and disturbing ideas are pondered by Michael Dummett (*Truth and the Past*, New York: Columbia University Press 2004, 74–77), only then to be dropped by him as too contrary to the evidence at hand.

from the perspective of the subject, it must also be stabilized by the B series. This interpretation, then, is a first step towards seeing that only the combination of the A and B series makes it possible to have a simultaneous, coherent understanding of stability and change.

### The arrival of the guest: The time in time and its relationship to narrative

The guest, who never ceases to not arrive, brings the proper time of his narrative into a space of hospitality that is also shaped by time. The formal sequence of hospitality, with its rituals of mediation, provides a stable frame, but the guest's narrative opens the space of the unknown, or so it seems. But my conjecture is that the narrative offered by the guest takes the form of McTaggart's B series, while the frame story takes the form of the A series.

Only superficially does the sequence of the scenes of hospitality – that is, the A series – guarantee security. In fact, just as in the A series every present moment leaves open the possibility of reinterpreting time as a whole, every step in the scheme of hospitality is profoundly ambivalent. Even when the guest knocks on the door, he does not know whether the house is a den of thieves or a deadly trap. Nor does the host know, when he opens the door and follows the imperative of hospitality, whether the guest will turn out to be a dangerous criminal. The gift the guest offers can generate unexpected ambivalence, while the food and drink the host provides can also have unpleasant effects (if he offers indigestible food, for example). It is not uncommon for the scene to turn out to be a meeting between enemies, a *déjà vu* of two people who ought to have stayed out of each other's way. And how can the guest be sure that the story he tells will not contribute to the anxiety and uncertainty of the host? Knocking, opening the door, shaking hands, entering, greeting, offering a gift, breaking bread, telling a story, and finally providing a bed: each of these stations can abruptly upset the supposedly stable course of the temporality of hospitality. Just as in

the A series the subject who moves in tandem with the present moment can always interpret the temporal series anew, the scheme of hospitality can be completely reinterpreted according to the situation, almost as in the peripety of a tragedy.

On this day of travel, the story the guest tells of his origins and of his experiences – that is, the B series – stabilizes a latently uncertain situation. The guest commits himself; he says who he is; he identifies himself; he positions himself in the coordinates of time and space. In the present time of the situation, his narrative stabilizes what came before, and the primary function of this stability here is that it should not and even cannot be revised. Of course, the guest could use his story to tell lies – and if he does, then he presents the narrated B series from the essentially insecure perspective of the present A series. For the host, though, the issue of whether the guest is lying remains opaque at first. He will want to believe his guest – he must believe his guest – for he wants to assure himself that the stranger has come with good intentions to the house he has been told to see as his own.<sup>15</sup>

These considerations lead to a surprising conclusion: from the perspective of the theory of time, the *mise en abyme* of the story within the story in the scenography of the guest is completely necessary as a stable temporal anchor for the essentially untenable and dizzyingly permanent reinterpretability of time. This stabilizing function works when the guest's narrative is not enveloped by the frame of the fundamentally uncertain and open-ended A series. When one story is allowed into another, the modal reinterpretation of time is stabilized by the relational time of the situation.

All this has far-reaching implications: narrative serves to give a cultural form to the relationship between the A and B series.<sup>16</sup> Precisely because

15 The normal case is that the frame story of the scene of hospitality follows the A series structurally while the narrative of the guest takes on the function of the B series. Of course, the special charm of many literary works inverts this relationship. In E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Ignaz Denner*, for example, the future Satanist first introduces himself as a pious guest; his story is a complete lie. Nevertheless, here, too, the dynamics of the inhospitable scene still derive from the relationship between the A and B series.

16 Here we can turn back to what is in fact McTaggart's main argument. It is actually relatively straightforward that the copying of the A series into the A series must

the two series as such cannot be represented by each other, they have to be realized in a form that is itself temporal: the narrative. In fact, every narrative has to combine the A and B series. With only the B series, there would be nothing to tell; there would only be the subjectless relationality of semantic positions. With only the A series, there would only be a chronicle, and in the absence of any stabilization by an actant, the causality of a sequence of events with a beginning would have no motivation beyond the ad hoc. Narrative is *the combination of both series*. If the stepmother in a fairy tale is stingy, "stingy" contains the level of sequence, the B series. That is, the B series can be realized in an adjective. If no such anchor function is integrated into the ongoing narrative, there can be no story. – A narratology that aims to have a rigorous theory of time must take these two temporal series into account.

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produce a vicious circle. In the second part of the novel named after him, Don Quixote meets people who have already read the first part. The result is a *mise en abyme* that always takes the same form (see the vivid schematization by Michael Dummett: A Defense of McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time. *Philosophical Review* LXIX (1960), 497–504 (esp. p. 498)). McTaggart concludes that time is unreal because one cannot explain the A series without repeatedly returning to the basic assumptions that underly it. That is, one can only produce a self-defeating explanation of the concept in terms of itself but cannot ascribe any "reality" to it. – My argument here is that the B series must always be copied into the A series – or vice versa. Instead of McTaggart's unreality, this approach enables the development of a cultural theory of quite ambitious concepts of time that can be given a definite frame of reference. McTaggart's conclusion can then be avoided by always reciprocally interpreting one temporal series in terms of the other. In the background of my argument is the suspicion that McTaggart fell prey to a kind of formalization that has to be responded to with the concreteness of cultural theory.

## The hospitality of literature

This provides a further perspective on the close analogy between the scene of hospitality and the offering of literature. Our reading of a poetic text always involves the possible revision of our assumptions up to now, but we tend to stabilize this volatility by unifying our previous acts of reading a given text as a coherent interpretation in terms of the B series. If a complete revision of our interpretive position can no longer be avoided, we may as well start reading all over again.

Why is the analogy between the scene of hospitality and the offering of literature so close? The answer can arguably be found in the previous formulation that literature is itself a guest in language. Literature is language's own figure of the third in language; it makes use of an aesthetic proper time in language ("ästhetische Eigenzeit"); it gives time when we take time, but it does not make these two times equivalent. This abstract formulation can be made a bit more concrete: if the reader takes enough time to interpret a text, then this interpretation is still not an equivalent offering to the offering of the text itself. No interpretation *pays the text back*. Even after it has been interpreted, the text always remains in a time of its own. The giving and the taking of time take place on both sides in equal measure, but it is the specific proper times of giving and taking that are invested here. Because of their monadic closure, no reckoning can be made with them. Culture is *aneconomic*; it cannot be converted in terms of equivalent calculations.<sup>17</sup>

In the fullest and strongest sense of the story in the story, then, the essentially untenable A series is supplemented by the stabilizing *memoria* of the B series, and time is thus considered not only from the perspective of (political) action but also from the perspective of cultural justice (insofar

17 On this fundamental position see Georges Bataille: *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1: *Consumption*. New York: Zone Books 1991.

as the actual meaning of *memoria* is justice).<sup>18</sup> Culturally complex time is thus the *mise en abyme* of time (B series) into time (A series), as well as the narrative gift of the guest and the form of the offering as an always asymmetrical exchange between aesthetic and exegetic time (*aisthesis*: the appearance of the guest; *exegesis*: listening to the story). The scene of the guest, the scene of a narrative temporally doubled from the outset, and the scene of the aesthetic proper time: these three temporal formations have to be understood as one, namely as the formulation of complex cultural time. And only this time can make hospitality possible, realize the reflection of narrative, and give time to exegesis.

## How much time does the guest have?

In terms of both cultural anthropology and the philosophy of time, the question I began with can now be seen as meaningless. The time of the guest, defined as how long he will stay, cannot be predetermined, calculated, or economized. Only when the A series is not neutralized by excessive rigour and thus remains open to the recollected past of the B series can a hospitable culture exist. We take time and give it to the guest, for insofar as we are always in the ongoing present moment of the time of action with its three modes, we need to secure ourselves in a relationally stable past (which of course does not actually remain stable at all). So we lend an ear to the guest's narrative or devote our time to the offerings of literature. We accept an experience of time that does not aim at any symmetrical exchange based on equivalence but instead implies aneconomic time-wasting, generous expenditure, and listening to the other. This cultural self-interpretation – a precarious balancing of the A and B series – is hospitable. The A and B

18 Anselm Haverkamp: Text als Mnemotechnik. In: *Gedächtniskunst. Raum – Bild – Schrift*. Eds. Anselm Haverkamp/Renate Lachmann. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1991, 7–15 (p. 14).

series remain asymmetric; they are not to be converted into an exchange based on equivalence. Their relationship to each other is both hermeneutic and constitutive, but it cannot be operationalized in any way.

As we know, regulatory apparatuses always try to quantify the time of the guest and thus make the mistake – from the perspective of the theory of time – of an inappropriate economization. That is, whoever asks how much time is appropriate for a guest wants to convert the non-equivalence of the giving and taking of time into an exchange based on equivalence. In the face of the conflict between the desideratum of hospitality and the political regulation of contingents of desirable people, contemporary refugee policy has long been profoundly perplexed (especially since Lampedusa). But in practice, a regulatory economy cannot do justice to an intrinsically highly complex postulate of natural rights. That is, the concept of hospitality that cannot be politicized.<sup>19</sup> The current refugee policy of the European states seeks to finalize the interpretive freedom of the A series through a rigorous interpretation in terms of an economy of equivalence. Such an approach negates the guest's proper time – and finally, the guest himself.

In the sense of an ethics of reading, contemporary cultural theory must emphasize that culture is fundamentally aneconomic. It must be remembered that the offering of time, and thus the offering of hospitality, as well, is fundamentally beyond negation. At least it will be so as long as the experience of the proper time of culture is assumed to be essential to anthropological self-description.

## The guest in literature

The narrative generates its narrative event from the meeting of one actor with another (A goes to B): if this basic assumption is valid, then every narrative and every drama can be described as an ongoing sequence of

19 See Derrida again: *Of Hospitality* (note 5).

scenes of hospitality. If this formulation is taken so far as to speak of the hospitable acceptance of a figurative term at the destination of the figure, then even metaphor (and thus, according to Quintilian, every trope)<sup>20</sup> is a site of hospitality. Surprisingly, though, given this fundamental claim, hospitality as such is a rare theme in literature, and even then it appears only relatively late in literary history. The guest is not a topos of European literature, at least not in the same sense as the lover, the robber, the rich man, the wanderer, or the scholar. Hospitality is evidently to be found more in the deep structure of culture than in its performative realizations. Sentences on hospitality can be found in many texts, but they are short. One has to be quite focused on finding them if one is not to miss them. Thus, if the guest is a precarious figure of the third, he eludes representation in a peculiar way. He is more likely to be a stranger, perhaps first an enemy and later a friend – just not the guest. In a sense, though, the guest is not “something”; he does not have any being as such. Such figures as the lover and the robber have characteristics that can be named, but the guest as a “literary character” does not. In this sense, the lover or the robber can be guests, while the guest, as a guest, can never “be” himself. If he is always present in literature, he is hardly ever visible. The guest is much like Augustine's characterization of time: whenever one wants to catch it, it escapes.<sup>21</sup>

The guest could actually have played an intensive role in the literature of the eighteenth century. The century loves to travel; its sensibility and its cult of friendship almost programmatically prepares it for the guest. At the

20 Quintilian defines the fundamental form of all tropes as the replacement of an initial meaning by a figurative meaning (VIII,6.1: “Tropus est verbi vel sermonis a propria significatione in aliam cum virtute mutatio”). This same definition is then used for metaphor (VIII,6.5: “transfertur ergo nomen aut verbum ex eo loco, in quo proprium est, in eum, in quo aut proprium deest aut translaturum proprio melius est”); Marcus Fabius Quintilianus: *Institutio oratoria/Ausbildung des Redners*. Ed. Helmut Rahn. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1995, 217–219.

21 “Quid es enim tempus? [...] si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerendi explicare velim, nescio” (Aurelius Augustinus: *Confessiones*. Eds. H. Jürgens/W. Schaub. Stuttgart: Teubner 1981, 275): For what is time? [...] If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know (XI, 15).



same time, travel is still quite arduous; between the cultivated zones, there are still passages of quite archaic ways of life. But only in the nineteenth century does the guest first become a theme, as a sentimental memory, in a sense, of a figure who has already become anachronistic. E.T.A. Hoffmann's dark stories are littered with scenes with guests, as in the appearance of Ignaz Denner at the house of the forester Andres or in the story *Der unheimliche Gast*. In the literature of realism, Wilhelm Raabe undertakes an extensive phenomenology of the guest and entitles one of his texts *Unruhige Gäste*.<sup>22</sup> It seems as if the guest becomes a literary figure at the moment when he disappears as an actual reality. Even Knigge's comment on the right of hospitality in 1788 is characterized by a completely conventionalized concept of hospitality: he connects "high notions of the right of hospitality" to old times, sparsely populated countries, and original customs but can only offer "rules of civility" to his own cultivated world.<sup>23</sup> Knigge's lines are a kind of eulogy to the original experience of hospitality. It took another generation for the Romantics to discover the guest himself as a literary figure.

Literary knowledge of hospitality evidently developed in German literary history only in retrospect, in the literature of the nineteenth century,

22 See Renate Bürner-Kotzam: *Vertraute Gäste – Befremdende Begegnungen in Texten des bürgerlichen Realismus*. Heidelberg: Winter 2001; Rolf Parr: *Unruhige Gäste bei Wilhelm Raabe*. In: *Gastlichkeit* (note 1), 301–316; Christof Hamann: *Unruhige Gäste in der Gartenlaube. Zum Parasitären von Raabes "Roman aus der Gesellschaft"*. In: *Die besten Bissen vom Kuchen*. Wilhelm Raabes Erzählwerk. Kontexte, Subtexte, Anschlüsse. Eds. Sören R. Fauth/Rolf Parr/Eberhard Rohse. Göttingen: Wallstein 2009, 297–316.

23 Adolph Freiherr Knigge: *Über den Umgang mit Menschen*. In: A. Knigge: *Ausgewählte Werke in zehn Bänden*. Ed. Wolfgang Fenner. Hannover: Fackelträger-Verlag 1993, vol. 6, 234: "In alten Zeiten hatte man hohe Begriffe von den Rechten der Gastfreundschaft. Noch pflegen diese Begriffe in Ländern und Provinzen, die weniger bevölkert sind oder wo einfachere Sitten bey weniger Reichthum, Luxus und Corruption herrschen, so wie auf dem Lande, in Ausübung gebracht und die Rechte der Gastfreundschaft heilig gehalten zu werden. In unsern glänzenden Städten hingegen, wo nach und nach der Ton der feinen Lebensart allen Biedersinn zu verdrängen anfängt, da gehören die Gesetze der Gastfreundschaft nur zu den Höflichkeits-Regeln, die Jeder nach seiner Lage und nach seinem Gefallen mehr oder weniger anerkennt und befolgt oder nicht."

which largely emerges from a life world in which the experience of original hospitality is now only a literary memory. Must cultural reflection on hospitality be seen as involving a constitutive delay? Is countering the rapid age of economic regulation by drawing out the proper time of the cultural a distinct task – a task that almost necessarily struggles with its own slowness?

If this is taken further, then no temporal symmetry governs the relationship between the contemporary issue of a regulatory politics and a cultural reflection of that politics – and perhaps it is not even possible for such a symmetry to do so. In this respect, critical time is a retrospective reflection of a field that only then becomes genuinely cultural at all. More precisely, when a stabilizing B series is copied into an A series focused on the immediate compulsion towards action of a particular moment, this copying involves a reflective pause, a critical turn against the time of action, so it is also characterized by a constitutive delay. The echo chamber of a cultural memory as a persistent force opposing the prevailing time of action – a force of worlds of meaning with their own proper time – can only be mobilized as such when a temporal politics has to be responded to with a reflection on time. Hospitality only takes place when the guest and his narrative are given time, that is, when they establish a space without any direct pressure to act. Only in this recursion of time (the A series) onto time (the B series), in the recursion of narrative to narrative, can time generate critical content through the establishment of a difference in time itself.

But this critical content must always pay the price of belatedness. Hospitality may indeed be a transcendental prerequisite for literature – and more generally, even for culture itself – but the guest as a thematic figure in literature is so rarely present precisely because he always comes too late. He follows the politics of action like a shadow. Hospitality and the guest himself must be seen as belonging to two distinct orders. Without hospitality, no culture could exist; it would die its incestuous heat death; its stories would all become tautological; it would unravel in a time of action without any identity at all. In this respect, the language of hospitality is a matter of transcendence, natural law, and generativity. But at the same time, the guest himself is hardly present in cultural signification: he is not a literary figure; he has no mythological attributes; he creates no iconography to trace



in the history of fine arts. Situations of hospitality can be found again and again, but the guest himself hardly ever turns up as such.

A central theorem for literature follows: the thematization of the guest only occurs when the necessity of a reflexive correction appears, the need to supplement the modular time of action with a stabilizing time of situations. To put it another way: it is situations of inhospitability that make it necessary to thematize the guest, to put him in the foreground against the background of hospitality. E.T.A. Hoffmann finds the uncanny guest (*Der unheimliche Gast*); his tale of the thief Ignaz Denner portrays the whole scenography of the guest in terms of the devilish perversion of hospitality; Raabe's *Unruhige Gäste* describes the incursion of a merely touristic, if now global mode of travel into the unstable morality of a mountain village. In the twentieth-century exile literature that thematizes inhospitability, the guest only shows up where he is unwanted. Evidently, the guest only becomes present as a theme in the moment of his negation. Not only does he arrive in literature too late (in the nineteenth century in the case of German literature), but above all, he appears in this mode of radical negation. And he only appears when this negation has gone so far that the hospitality that enables culture first has to be remembered. In Raabe's war story *Hastenbeck*, it takes seventy pages for the hero to enter the house that would turn him away, and the rest of the action is one long story of trying to escape to the hospitable shelter he longs for. It seems as if cultural discourses only let the guest come onstage when the hospitality of culture itself is at stake.

A literary phenomenology of the guest is confronted by multiple paradoxes: first, his invisibility, then his belatedness, and finally his appearance as the refused guest. The guest as such slips away, just as time itself slips away. Falling through itself onto its other and assuming the form of its own *mise en abyme*, narrative always draws on the indirect, structural power of a figure that, as a figure of the third, never ceases to not arrive.

Translated by Andrew Shields

SIMON WARD

## "Of Time and the City": Contemporary Visual Culture and the Times of Berlin

Durch das rechnerische Wesen des Geldes ist in das Verhältnis der Lebens Elemente eine Präzision, eine Sicherheit in der Bestimmung von Gleichheiten und Ungleichheiten, eine Unzweideutigkeit in Verabredungen und Ausmachungen gekommen – wie sie äußerlich durch die allgemeine Verbreitung der Taschenuhren bewirkt wird. [...] Die Beziehungen und Angelegenheiten des typischen Großstädtlers pflegen so mannigfaltige und komplizierte zu sein, vor allem: durch die Anhäufung so vieler Menschen mit so differenzierten Interessen greifen ihre Beziehungen und Betätigungen zu einem so vielgliedrigen Organismus ineinander, dass ohne die genaueste Pünktlichkeit in Versprechungen und Leistungen das Ganze zu einem unentwirrbaren Chaos zusammenbrechen würde. [...] Wenn alle Uhren in Berlin plötzlich in verschiedener Richtung falschgehen würden, auch nur um den Spielraum einer Stunde, so wäre sein ganzes wirtschaftliches und sonstiges Verkehrsleben auf lange hinaus zerrüttet. So ist die Technik des großstädtischen Lebens überhaupt nicht denkbar, ohne dass alle Tätigkeiten und Wechselbeziehungen aufs pünktlichste in ein festes, übersubjektives Zeitschema eingeordnet würden.<sup>1</sup>

[Because of the character of calculability which money has, there has come into the relationships of the elements of life a precision and a degree of certainty in the definition of the equalities and inequalities and an unambiguousness in agreements and arrangements, just as externally this precision has been brought about through the general diffusion of pocket watches. The relationships and concerns of the typical metropolitan resident are so manifold and complex that, especially as a result of the agglomeration of so many persons with such differentiated interests, their relationships and activities intertwine with one another into a many-membered organism. In view of this fact, the lack of the most exact punctuality in promises

<sup>1</sup> Georg Simmel: Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben. In: Thomas Petermann (ed.): *Die Großstadt. Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Städteausstellung. Jahrbuch der Gehe Stiftung zu Dresden* 9 (1902/03), 185–206 (p. 194–195).